

Radical Islamists in the New York Times: A Critical Discourse Analysis Study

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ملخص البحث

تتناول الدراسة تحليل النقدي للأخبار التي تتناول المسلمين المتشددين في جريدة ال نيويورك تايمز (ان واي سي)، كممثل عن الاعلام الأمريكي. الدراسة تطرح تساؤلات بخصوص التلاعب باللغة من اجل الحصول على منافع ايولوجية، وكيفية استخدام أفعال الشرط وتوظيفها بالإضافة الى استخدام الافتراض والمبالغة من اجل الحصول على التأثير المطلوب وهل هنالك تأثير على نظرة العالم للمسلمين بصورة عامة. الدراسة تهدف الى إيجاد فيما إذا كانت الصحيفة تتلاعب باللغة من اجل الحصول على منافع ايولوجية وكذلك كشف تأثير المسلمين المتشددين على نظرة العالم للمسلمين بصورة عامة. من اجل تحقيق اهداف هذه الدراسة هنالك عد من الفرضيات المطروحة منها ان الصحيفة تتلاعب باللغة من اجل الحصول على اهداف ايولوجية بالإضافة الى ان الطريقة التي يقدم بها المسلمين المتشددين دون تميزهم عن المعتدلين تؤثر سلبا على الآخر. اما بخصوص الطريقة التي تتبعها الدراسة من اجل تحقيق الأهداف فهي تتبنى نمودجا انتقائيا يتكون من جزئين: الجزء اللغوي يعتمد على من فان دايك (1988)، والجزء الأيديولوجي يعتمد على فان دايك (1995) "المربع الأيديولوجي". بالإضافة الى مفهوم يول عن مؤشرات الافتراض (1996).

Abstract

The current study is carried out in the field of Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA) for the analysis of articles taken from New York Times (henceforth NYC), as a representative for American media. The study rises the following questions: (1) How radical Islamists groups are tackled linguistically in the discourse of American newspapers? (2) Which type of modality is used heavily to reflect the ideologies of American newspapers? (3) Do American newspapers rely on a specific trigger in the production of news? (4) Do American newspapers consider radical Muslims as if they were representative for Islam or not? The study aims at: (1) Analyzing linguistically the discourse of newspapers to know what is the role of the American writers in the reproduction of racism, and discrimination in their discourse. (2) Examining the role of modality in presenting issues related to radical Islamists. (3) Finding out which presupposition trigger is used mostly in American newspapers. (4) Explaining the western view to Islam and Muslims. To achieve the aims of this study the following procedures are presented: (1) presenting a brief review about CDA and Radical Islamists. (2) Discussing the model used. (3) Analyzing the articles following van Dijk Dijk's "News discourse" (1988) which is taken to handle the linguistic level of the study. Concerning the ideological level, van Dijk 's "Ideological Square" (1995b) is used. The study also uses Yule's (1996) for the analysis of presupposition triggers. Keywords: critical discourse analysis, radical Islamists, American newspapers, modality, presupposition, disclaimer, hyperbole.

1. Introduction

As the phenomenon of radicalism becomes one of the most difficult issues that face humanity since it effects the life of all people all over the world nowadays, no one is secured a terrorist attack can hit anyone anytime and anywhere. Moreover, people depend on the media as the main source of information, so it is important to shed lights on the attitude of the media towards this phenomenon. It is hoped that the present study find answers to the following questions: (1) How radical Islamists groups are tackled linguistically in the discourse of American newspapers? (2)

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Which type of modality is used heavily to reflect the ideologies of American newspapers? (3) Do American newspapers rely on a specific trigger in the production of news? (4) Do American newspapers consider radical Muslims as if they were representative for Islam or not?.

The aims, this study seeks to achieve, are: (1) Analyzing linguistically the discourse of newspapers to know what is the role of the American writers in the reproduction of racism, and discrimination in their discourse. (2) Examining the role of modality in presenting issues related to radical Islamists. (3) Finding out which presupposition trigger is used mostly in American newspapers. (4) Explaining the western view to Islam and Muslims.

Consequently, the study hypothesized/ the following: (1) Some American writers tend to use more explicitly discriminative language. (2) In the news, the discourse of radical Islamists are closely related to predictive modal verbs. (3) American newspapers rely heavily on lexical presuppositions in the presentation of news. (4) The American writers' use of discriminative language against the radical Muslims affects the way people look to Muslims in general.

The following procedures are followed to achieve the aims of the study: (1) presenting a brief review about CDA and Radical Islamists. (2) Discussing the model used. (3) Analyzing the articles following van Dijk's "News discourse" (1988) which is taken to handle the linguistic level of the study. Concerning the ideological level, van Dijk Ideological Square (1995b) is used. The study also uses Yule's (1996) for the analysis of presupposition triggers.

2. What is CDA?

Since the users of language do not operate in isolation, but in a set of cultural psychological, and social frameworks, CDA aims at understanding language as a social practice. CDA studies the relation between textual structures and their social functions in any social interaction. Since there is no one to one correspondence between structures of the text and their social functions, such type of analysis is considered complicated. Such a lack of correspondence creates a kind of opaqueness that CDA aims to reveal. Fairclough (1995:132-133) demonstrates that CDA is a discourse analysis aiming at exploring in a systematic way the mysterious relationships of causality and determination between discourse and the social and cultural structure. To understand how relations of power and struggle over power ideologically form these discursive practices, in addition to how this ambiguous relation between discourse and society is actually a factor effecting power and hegemony.

According to Wodak (2001:2) CDA may be seen as basically concerned with "analyzing structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as stated in language". In other words, the general aim of CDA is critically examining the effect of the social inequality on the discourse, this means how the language user or the discourse expresses, shapes, and points out the social inequality.

3. Who are Radical Islamists?

After the events of September 11th in the united states the world view towards Islam and Muslims have changed. At this point, Islam became the religion of death and Muslims starts to suffer because of the works of radicalism. Al-Qaeda is the first radical group to establish the blood attacks against humanity, followed by minor radical groups in all over the world. After Al-Qaeda leader was killed, a new group of radicals emerged namely ISIS. Away from well-known

radical groups, there are militias that belong to Islamic parties which are classified as terrorist those parties include, Hezbollah, Hamas, Muslims Brotherhood, and others.

4. The Model

4.1 The Linguistic Level

The linguistic level is restricted to the syntactic, semantic and rhetoric features of language.

4.1.1 Syntactic Analysis

The syntactic level in this study is expressed through passivization.

4.1.1.1 Passive Voice

Passivization is the first linguistic component of the model followed. According to Quirk et.al (1985.159), voice is a grammatical category which makes it possible to present the sentence in two different forms without changing the fact reported. For example,

“-The butler murder the detective. (Active)

-The detective was murdered by the butler.” (Passive)

In addition, the changing from the active to the passive involves rearranging the two clause elements, and the addition of by. These changes are: (a) the subject of the active becomes the agent of the passive; (b) the object of the active becomes the subject of the passive; and (c) the addition of the preposition by before the agent which is considered as an optional element (ibid.159-160).

Fairclough's studies (1989, 2003) have shown that the ideological effects in discursive discourse. Generally, obscuring the act of the agent is normally achieved by the use of passive voice and nominalization. Passivation gives the speaker or the writer the choice to remove the agent to create what is known as agentless passive voice (Simpson 1993).

4.1.2 Semantic and Rhetoric Analysis

This is related to the following semantic features: modality, presupposition, and disclaimer. In addition to hyperbole which is related to Rhetoric.

4.1.2.1 Modality

According to Quirk et.al, modality is defined as the way in which the meaning of the clause is qualified to the decision of the speaker about the probability of the proposition. All scholars investigate modality through examining the meaning of the modal verbs. The constraining factors of meaning in modal verbs were divided into two types: those that involve people's control on the action such as 'permission', 'obligation', and 'violation'. And those concerned with the people's prediction of what is going to happen such as 'possibility' and prediction'.

4.1.2.2 Presupposition

Yule (2000:27) sees that presupposition has been related with the utilization of an expansive number of words, expressions, and structures. These etymological shapes are thought to be pointers of potential presupposition, which can just wind up noticeably genuine presupposition in setting with speakers. Hence, he states six sorts of presupposition that are: **the existential, the factive, the non-factive, the lexical, the structural and the counterfactual.**

Table (1) Types of Presuppositions

Type of Presupposition	Definition
Existential	The existence of an object
Factive	Refers to the facts associated with verbs such as know, and realize

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Non-factive	Assume that what follow is not true, usually related to verbs such as dreamed, and imagined
Lexical	The use of the verb with its asserted meaning is interrupted with the presupposition of another non-asserted meaning
Structural	Certain structures presuppose that part of the structure is assumed to be true
Counterfactual	What is presupposed is the opposite of truth

4.1.2.3 Disclaimer

van Dijk (2013:187) states that the classical structure of disclaimer is that the first part focusing on the positive and good characteristic of the in-group, and then followed by the second part which immediately starts with 'but' in which the speakers say negative things about the out-group. There are different types of disclaimers, such as:

“Apparent Concession: They may be very smart, but....

Apparent Empathy: They may have had problems, but...

Apparent Apology: Excuse me, but...

Apparent Effort: We do everything we can, but...

Transfer: I have no problems with them, but my clients...

Reversal, blaming the victim: THEY are not discriminated against, but WE are!”

4.1.2.4 Hyperbole

Hyperbole is a figure of speech used to describe an object, an idea and other that may look exaggerated. So it is mainly concerned with describing an action or event in an overestimated way (Perrine 1969:110). According to van Dijk (2000:73), the bad qualities and characteristic of others (out-group) are often expressed in a hyperbolic form and sometime these forms are implied in a kind of metaphor.

4.2 Ideological Level

The ideological level is expressed by van Dijk's “Ideological Square” (1995). van Dijk (1995:33) suggested the “Ideological square” model which is based on the “twin strategies” of “in-group” positive description and “out-group” negative description. In short, the ideological square has the following possibilities:

- “• Emphasize positive things about *us*.
- Emphasize negative things about *them*.
- De-emphasize negative things about *us*.
- De-emphasize positive things about *them*.”

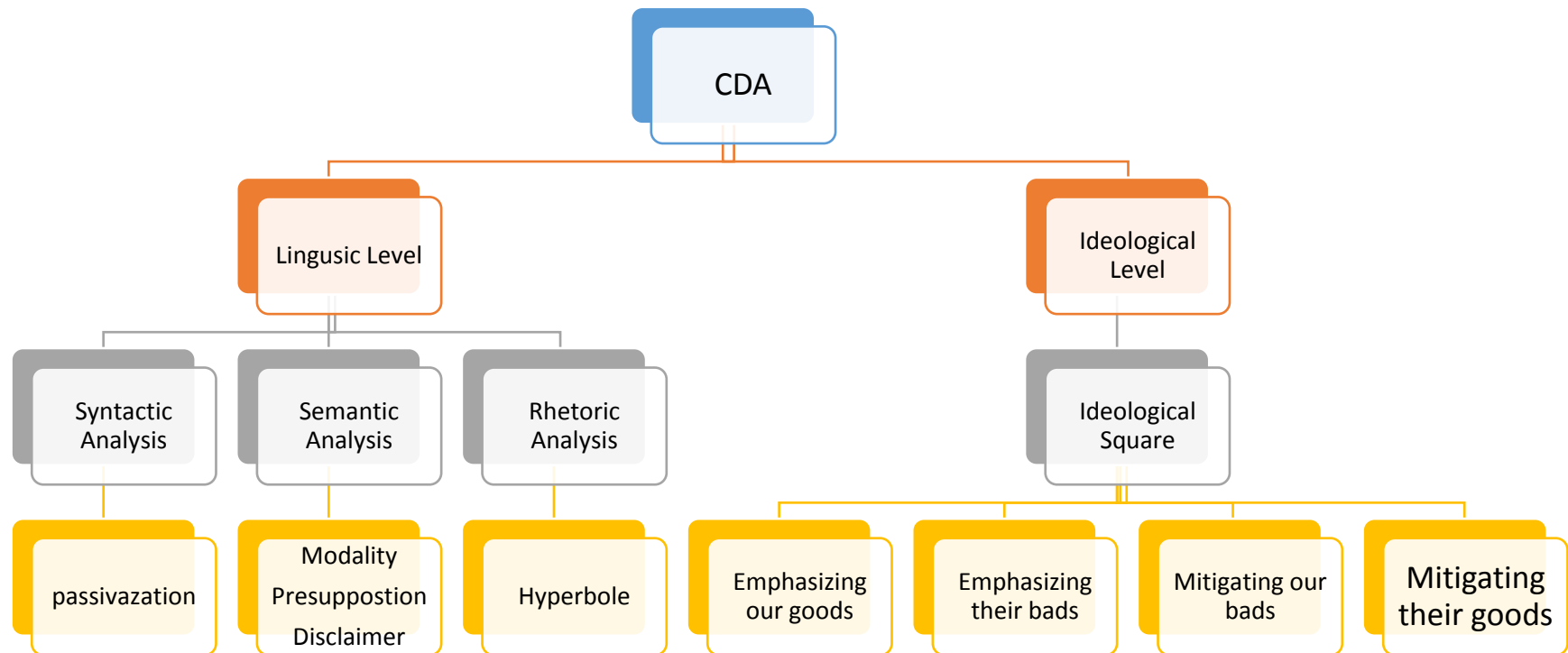


Figure (1) The eclectic model for the analysis

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5. Data Analysis

5.1 article 1

The headline of this article “Hezbollah and Syrian Army Attack Islamists on Lebanon Border”. Therefore, the general meaning of this article is about the two Muslim group conflicting with each other.

Table (2) Passivization in NYC Article 1

Article's Headline	Passive	Active	Total
“Hezbollah and Syrian Army Attack Islamists on Lebanon Border”	13	27	40
Frequency	32.5%	67.5%	

Passive voice scores (13, 32.5 %) out of (40) this means that the article aims to focus on the doer of the action more than the receiver of the action does. For example, the following sentence “Lebanese army units tried to move into Aarsal to route the militants but where attacked by suicide bombers” shows that in the passive clause the emphasis is only on the doer of the action (suicide bombers) whose identity is not mentioned, whether they belong to Hezbollah or to the Islamists (Islamic State). This leaves the space open about the real identity of the bombers.

Table (3) Modality in NYC Article 1

Type of Modality	Frequency
Possibility	1
Prediction	1

Concerning modality, it occurs in two positions: in the first, “*The figures could not be independently verified*” the modal verb refers to the possibility that the identity of the fighters could not be determined this may be due to the bad condition of the corpse and the fact that the Islamists fighting with ISIS are of different nationalities. While in the second position, “*Mr. Hariri would meet with President Trump on Tuesday...*” it refers to the situation in which Mr. Hariri meets Trump, so it predicts the happening of the action. This may declare that president’s Trump visit to Lebanon has to do with Hezbollah’s intervention in the Syrian crisis since it is associated with radicalism.

Table (3) Types of Presuppositions in NYC Article 1

Trigger	Type of Trigger	Presupposition
“Hezbollah the powerful Shiite group backed by Iran” and “Sunni Militants from the Islamic State”	Existential	There is a sect conflict between Hezbollah and Islamic State

Regarding presupposition, sentence “Hezbollah the powerful Shiite group backed by Iran, a staunch ally of Mr. Assad, said it was time...” and sentence “Tense thousands of Syrian...Sunni

Militants from the Islamic State, the Nusra Front and others jihadist group fighting Syrian's six-years-old civil war ". The use of words such as "Shiite" and "Sunni" may presuppose that the conflict between Hezbollah and the Islamists is a matter of sect issues. In addition, this may presuppose that Hezbollah members are only Shiite and Islamic State members are only Sunni.

As far as disclaimer is concerned, apparent concession occurs in sentence "Hassan Nasr Allah, said it was "high time" to end the threat from militants in Asral. But his group's muscular role in Syria has drawn sharp criticism..." since the sentence starts with showing his positive role in the crisis then they refer to the negative opinion of Lebanese towards Hezbollah.

Moving to Hyperbole, it is found in two positions in the article: in the sentence "it was terrifying", the witness was describing how terrible the explosions were due to the conflict between Hezbollah and Islamists. Moreover, in "tough, tough decision" General Thomas (the commander of the military's Special Operations Command) was taking about the difficulty they had in ending the Russian program concerning the arming of the Syrian rebels (Islamists).

5.2. Article 2

The headline "Militants Killed Egyptian Security Forces in Devastating Ambush" talks about setup made by Islamic militia and results in the murder of almost 59 police officer.

Table (4) Passivization in NYC Article 2

Article's Headline	Passive	Active	Frequency
"Militants Killed Egyptian Security Forces in Devastating Ambush"	9	27	36
Frequency	25%	75%	

Passivization marks (9, 25%) out of (36). The article begins with "Militants carried out a devastating ambush on a convoy of Egyptian police and security officials deep inside the western desert late Friday in the deadliest such attack in years, security officials said on Saturday" which explains the whole story of the article. Such active sentence provides full information about who is involved in the actions but the word "militants" does not determine which Islamic group is meant since the body contains Muslims Brotherhood and Islamic state. The passivization is used to convey actions related to that militia since the real doer of the action is not fully determined.

Table (5) Modality in NYC Article 2

Type of Modality	Frequency
Possibility	2

Concerning modality, the article includes two modal verbs. In the sentence "The guys are behind us, chasing us in their cars," one officer can be heard saying" it expresses the possibility of the police station to hear the conversation took place between the two officers as they were hunted by the Islamic militia. The second modal verb "some experts cautioned that the Hasm statement of responsibility might be a fabrication." The modality here suggests the possibility that Hasm is lying about claiming responsibility for the action claiming that they are a small group and incapable of executing such huge mission.

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Table (6) Presupposition in NYC Article 2

Trigger	Type of Trigger	Presupposition
“But the scale and sophistication of the ambush”	Factive	Another group execute the attack

As far as presupposition is concerned, the sentence “But the scale and sophistication of the ambush on Friday bore the hallmarks of more experienced and heavily armed militants,” presupposes that the executer of the attack is more sophisticated than Hasm which is considered as a small group. “An initial claim of responsibility by Hasm, a small Islamist group that emerged last year” and “Hasm doesn’t operate in that area and they are not capable of this kind of operation” are clear evidence that Hasm is not the executor of the attack. In addition, Muslim Brotherhood has been listed as a terrorist organization and has claimed responsibility for a previous similar attacks yet no one dear to accuse them of the action and they blame Islamic State and Hasm for it. This is clear in Mr. Beheiri words, a security researcher at the state-run Al Ahram Center for Strategic Studies, “Hasm doesn’t operate in that area and they are not capable of this kind of operation”. This provides a kind of coverage for their acts.

Regarding disclaimer, two types of disclaimer occur: concession and transfer: the concession type occurs when Hasm announces that it is responsible for the attack “An initial claim of responsibility by Hasm, a small Islamist group that emerged last year, was discounted by militancy experts who questioned its authenticity. There was no other claim.” Experts refuse to believe such a claim but the article mentions that no other group claim the responsibility so there is a kind of insistence by the article that Hasm is the one responsible in spite of the negation of the experts. While the transfer occurs when the experts said that, the attack was too massive for such a small group to carry it “But the scale and sophistication of the ambush on Friday bore the hallmarks of more experienced and heavily armed militants, and some experts cautioned that the Hasm statement of responsibility might be a fabrication.”

Moving to hyperbole, the adjective “devastating” which means highly destructive or catastrophic is used to reflect the massiveness of the attack. In addition, it is repeated several times in the body of the article to emphasize how enormous the attack was.

4.2 Ideological Square

The selected newspaper, NYC, follows the path of van Dijk (positive In-group representation, and negative Out-group representation) especially when taking about Muslims regardless to the fact that they are radicals, their beliefs are different from the moderated Muslims. Therefore, it represents all Muslims as Out-group. Moreover, the selected newspapers represent the beliefs of the American community and could also represent the international community in general, that’s why they always try to reflect the good aspects of the American community towards Muslims, since they are In-group.

6. Conclusion

At the linguistic level, the analysis shows that American newspapers, represented by NYC, manipulate the language in different ways in order to serve their ideologies. Moreover, NYC do not pay any attention to moderate Muslims and how they think or react to issues related to radicalism. In addition, There is no attempt to clear the name of moderate Muslims from those attacks made by radical Islamists. The bad quality related to Radicalism are generalized to all Muslims, this could be seen as an attempt to manipulate people to see all Muslims as radicals and destroy the real identity of Islam. Finally, The Out-group represented by all Muslims are always portrayed as barbarous, and people seeking for lust by killing innocents, while the In-group, with or without terror tendencies, are the victims of such barbarous acts.

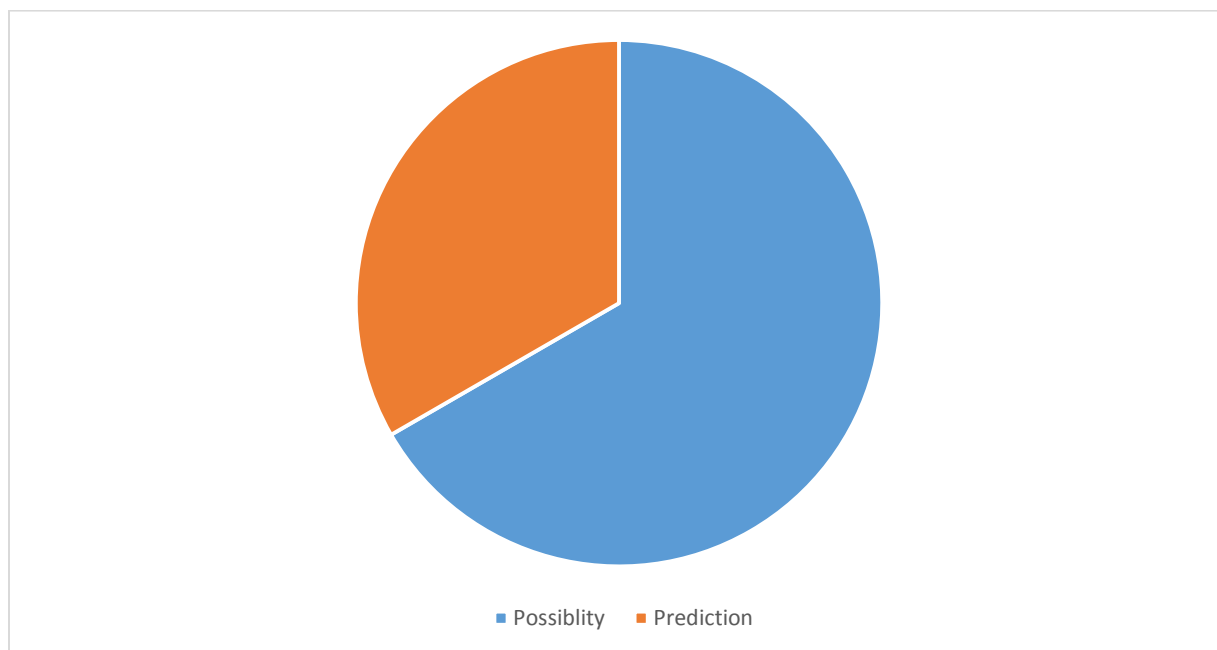


Figure (2) Modality Percentage in NYC Article

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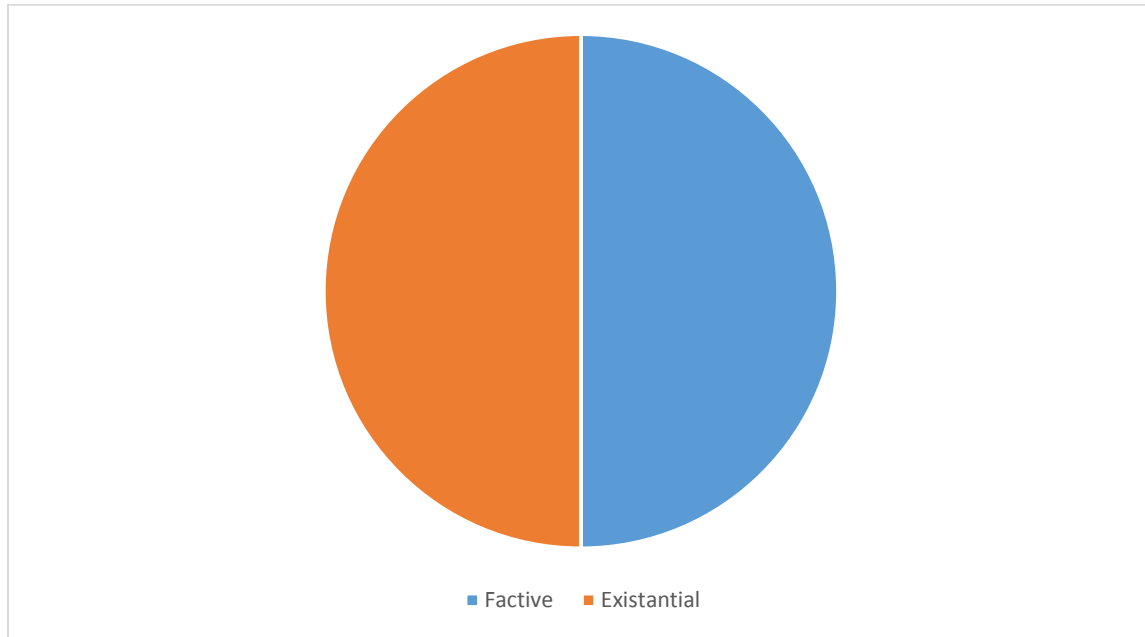


Figure (3) Presupposition Percentage in NYC Article

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